

College leaders join PM in India



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West Nottinghamshire College principal Asha Khemka OBE (centre left) arrives in Mumbai with Prime Minister David Cameron as part of a UK trade delegation to India. Also pictured, clockwise from top, are David Willetts MP, Lord Popat of Harrow and Priti Patel MP. See page 3

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www.feweek.co.uk

Ben Nicholls interview



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Providers to get funding protection

Chris Henwood
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Providers are to be protected from potentially huge drops in funding when a new payments regime is introduced from August.

The Skills Funding Agency exclusively told *FE Week* that “transitional protection” would be in place for the new adult funding system after research showed the value of many qualification would fall by more than 20 per cent.

However, the agency’s protection measure could also be used to limit the amount it pays out with the research having shown that the value of some qualifications could rocket.

One such qualification, uncovered by *FE Week*, will soar 271 per cent.

This change in the value of qualifications, between the current ‘demand-led funding formula’ and the new ‘streamlined funding system for adults,’ is called turbulence.

The agency said it was acting to limit the effect of turbulence on providers — and the qualifications watchdog Ofqual said it was “alert” to the possibility that some qualifi-

cations could become more attractive to providers.

An agency spokesperson said: “We accept that the simplified funding system will shift rates of individual qualifications, but our initial assessments suggest that turbulence at provider level will be low in most cases.

“Transitional protection will be put in place to limit this turbulence even further.”

An Ofqual spokesperson said: “The way qualifications are funded can have an impact on the market, and create particular incentives. As a regulator, we are alert to this.”

When the current funding system was introduced in 2008/09, transitional protection was also put in place for the same reason and on that occasion funding variations in both directions were limited to a maximum of 2.1 per cent.

However, no further details were available from the agency on the new “transitional protection”.

Nevertheless, its announcement was welcomed within the sector.

“It is undoubtedly a period of persistent transition in the sector and

curriculum planners are facing constantly shifting priorities as they respond to policy changes and prepare for new initiatives such as the Study Programme and Traineeships,” said David Grailey, chief executive of the awarding body NCFE.

“At a time of such turbulence, the latest funding developments are an added pressure for colleges and training providers.

“We welcome transitional protection for providers, and hope it adequately addresses the issue of turbulence,” he said.

And Association of Colleges chief executive Martin Doel said: “We have appreciated the consultative approach that has been taken to simplifying the agency funding regime and think this collaboration will have resulted in a more effective funding methodology.

“But the introduction of any new system has the potential to generate unforeseen consequences and a degree of unwanted instability.”

“We therefore welcome the provision of pragmatic and sensible transitional support as a means of managing change most effectively.”

A spokesperson for the Association of Employment and Learning Providers added: “With apprenticeship rates being held, this is less of a big issue than it might have been, but we support the principle of not causing too much short-term disruption.”

The agency spokesperson said it was still accepting feedback on the proposed new funding system.

“As we stated when we published the Funding Rules 2013/2014, we continue to welcome feedback on specific funding rules that are not clear or any area where a rule is missing,” she said.

“We will address these clarifications and update the document, with a final version of the document to be published by the end of March 2013.”

“Between now and March rates are being reviewed as part of this process.”

Email FundingSystemsTeam@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk to give the agency feedback on its new funding system proposals by Friday, March 15.

Cutting the deck in Cornwall



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Top PM in India tweets:

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 visit has opened deep & wide doors for the college sector & @ AoC_India. Confident and proud government to Government commitment.

 **@GeorgeLayfield**
 Just watched the PM in India. Did a great job promoting HE & totally ignored Further Education - the best conduit to both work AND Higher Ed

 **@WestNotts**
 If you don't already know @ AshaKhemkaOBE is part of PM David Cameron's trade visit to India. We're very proud!

 **@IndiaToday**
 Finally some good news: British PM Cameron woos Indian students, announces limitless entry for study and work in UK

 **@MargueriteHogg**
 Cameron in India partnership pledge — but what about UK colleges, PM? You have chair of @ AoC_India out there with you!

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Qualifications warning

Chris Henwood

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The Skills Funding Agency "risks destabilising the system" with plans to stop paying out for more than 1,000 qualifications, it has been claimed.

The Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) hit out at the agency over its moves to "rationalise the publicly funded offer for adults for 2013/14".

It could result in the end of agency funding for more than 1,000 qualifications that have seen fewer than 100 enrolments from 2011 to last November.

A further 1,440 qualifications that had no enrolments at all in the same period are also at risk of losing agency funding from August.

A spokesperson for FAB, whose members include the likes of City & Guilds, NCFE, Edexcel and Prince's Trust, said: "The intention of the agency to withdraw funding from a significant number of qualifications with low enrolments risks destabilising the system and cuts across the free functioning of the market for qualifications."

Among the qualifications at risk for having had little uptake are ones in touch typing, getting on at work, scalp massage and eyelash perming.

Meanwhile, those at risk for no enrolment include cover supervision of pupils in schools, top person for high-risk confined spaces, estimating and felling and processing trees over 380mm.

Ofqual director of regulation Fiona Pethick has already written to awarding bodies asking them to withdraw their least popular qualifications, "rather than to introduce a new condition requiring this [withdrawal of qualification]."

An agency spokesperson said: "We are working with the sector to ensure public funding

is focussed on qualifications that deliver the highest standards and respond to the needs of learners and employers."

Nevertheless, the FAB spokesperson said there were "serious concerns" about the agency's plans.

"We recognise that this action has been taken in the context of the simplification of the adult funding system and general concern about the large number of qualifications that there are currently in the QCF [Qualifications and Credit Framework].

"However, we point out that the QCF was populated in 2010 – 2011 with qualifications that were required and approved by the Sector Skills Councils [SSCs] as part of the UK Vocational Qualifications Reform programme [UKVRP].

"At that time awarding bodies could not develop qualifications for the QCF unless they had the support of the SSCs as representative of the employers in their sector."

They added: "We have notified the agency of our serious concerns about the impact of their actions, particularly in relation to qualifications with low enrolments."

"We shall be interested in whether our concerns turn out to be justified and shall be monitoring the position closely over the coming weeks."

However, funding for the qualifications could yet remain in place with the agency having launched a consultation on its plans.

"We recognise there may be a need to continue funding new starts for some qualifications with limited demand," it says on the agency website, along with an invite for awarding organisations, colleges and training providers to put the case for continued funding for the at-risk qualifications.

The consultation ends at noon on Wednesday, March 6. Visit the agency's funding and then implementation webpage for more details.

FE Week news in brief

Elmfield contract ends

A training contract billed as the UK's "largest work-based learning programme" is set to come to an end.

Elmfield Training's three-year deal with supermarket giant Morrisons will come to its natural end by August.

A spokesperson for Elmfield, which is in talks about renewing the contract, said: "Morrisons and Elmfield will continue to work closely to support learners enrolled before August so that they complete their qualifications successfully with us."

A Morrisons spokesperson said: "We have invited a number of providers to express interest, including Elmfield."

Jobs saved in college deal for Pearson arm

West Nottinghamshire College has agreed to take on most of Pearson in Practice, saving around 170 jobs.

No financial details on the deal, which will affect around 4,000 learners, were released.

The deal was welcomed by Rod Bristow, president of Pearson UK, and college principal Asha Khemka OBE, who said: "We are committed to managing the transfer openly, fairly and speedily."

A smaller number of learners from Pearson in Practice, which will be renamed Vision Workforce Skills, are being transferred to other providers.

The future of 560 workers had been thrown into jeopardy last month as Pearson announced plans to close the firm, bought as Melorio Plc, and consisting of Zenos and Construction Learning World, two years ago for £99.3m.

Provider shift 'unjust' says creditor

Eleanor Radford

[@EleanorRadford](http://www.feweek.co.uk)

The boss of a firm set to lose thousands of pounds after a provider went into administration branded it "unjust" that another company could operate with the same board of directors, based in the same offices — having also taken over the same training contract.

M2 Training, that was responsible for 4,000 learners, had a Skills Funding Agency contract last year of £5.175m, but went into administration in December, owing creditors around £1.1m.

Among those owed money by the firm, which carried out training in the automobile and IT sectors, were HMRC at £637,000 and Edexcel at £93,000.

However, the agency allowed the firm's business to switch to Work Skills Limited — which had the same six directors as M2 and was based at the same Gloucestershire address as M2, according to Companies House documents.

The directors, *FE Week* understands, raised £150,000 to buy M2 from administrators Janes Insolvency Practitioners.

That money would go towards paying off M2 creditors, said administrator David Hughes.

But Swindon-based car dealership Fish Brothers was owed more than £3,000 by M2 and its finance director Keith Butler said he was unhappy.

He claimed administrators told him it was "anticipated" he would receive up to just 15 per cent of what he was owed.

Mr Butler said it was "unjust to have been left out of pocket while a new company started, carrying on as before".

He said: "No creditor is happy about getting back 10 to 15 pence in the pound. It will have a negative effect on our business."

However, Work Skills director John Henry, formerly also a director of M2, insisted that creditors of the old company "would not be left out of pocket".

He defended their decision to put M2 Training into administration. Mr Henry said M2 had started out training drivers but grew to include professional qualifications before getting involved in research with fuel efficiencies and engine management research.

This expansion, he said, had led "M2 to administration".

"The two parts of the company — engines and training — were not compatible anymore," he told *FE Week*.

"Rather than having an amalgamation of

businesses we want to focus on training. I personally am confident that this is going to be a high-quality training provider."

Administrator Mr Hughes said the switch to Work Skills was the "better alternative" for learners as well as the 100 employees whose jobs had shifted from M2.

"All the people owed money by M2 have been written to and told about the process," he said.

"They will get a good percentage of their money back. The price that Work Skills paid for the business will fund a dividend for M2 creditors."

"We will know in about two weeks' time how much money the creditors will be paid."

The agency declined to comment on why it had allowed a contract to shift from a company that had gone into administration, to another firm with the same board of directors.

A spokesperson for the agency said M2 requested to shift its contract to Work Skills in May 2012. The request was approved through the agency's "standard processes" and took place in November 2012, she said.

"Following the novation [shift] Work Skills Limited took on all the responsibilities of the contract previously held by M2 Training Limited, including those that had accrued prior to the novation," she said.

Colleges join Cameron on largest delegation to India

Chris Henwood
@Chris_Henwood

College principals were among a ground-breaking UK trade delegation to India, led by Prime Minister David Cameron.

West Nottinghamshire College's Asha Khemka OBE, New College Nottingham's Amarjit Basi (right) and Norman Cave, from Birmingham's Bournville College, formed part of the biggest ever UK delegation.

It consisted of more than 100 companies — including Rolls-Royce, London Underground and the English Premier League.

As chair of AoC (Association of Colleges) India, Mrs Khemka was with Mr Cameron as he stepped off the plane in Mumbai on Monday, February 18 (see front).

"It is a huge honour to be involved in this important mission to India and to join such an esteemed delegation led by the Prime Minister," said Mrs Khemka, who signed a Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of AoC India with the Confederation of Indian Industries.

"India has an ambition to create 500 million skilled technicians by 2022, which would be a challenge for any country. UK Colleges can make a significant contribution to this agenda, which is what AoC in India has been set up to support."

"This visit sends another strong message that, as well as attracting Indian students to the UK, we have a commitment to be part of developing India's skills infrastructure."

Mr Basi was involved in the three-day visit, which started on Monday, February 18, having overseen the launch last month of New College Nottingham's International Lifestyles Academy (NILA), in New Delhi — the first vocational training centre of its kind in India.

"The opportunity to be in the company of delegates drawn from world class organisations such as the CBI and The London Stock Exchange on this latest visit — and to share our vision and have it endorsed and supported by both UK and Indian Governments — is fantastic," said Mr Basi.

"It's great for Nottingham's economy and for UK PLC too."

Bournville College has also established it-

self in India, with a training and consultancy arm based in Kolkata.

"It is a privilege to be part of such a historic delegation and for the FE sector to be recognized for the part it plays in the development of closer business, cultural and economic ties with India," said Mr Cave.

Among the Prime Minister's announcements while in India was a promise to help Indian students get UK visas.

"As India grows, it needs a partner that can support its ambition — in infrastructure, in energy, in healthcare and more," said Mr Cameron.

"It wants its business to have unrivalled access to European and global markets and its students to get the best education in the world. Britain can do all these things and more."

"So, we have to get out there, make the case for Britain and open doors for British business."

AoC international director John Mountford, who also formed part of the delegation, said: "We are glad that the government wants to encourage genuine students to study in the



UK at all levels of institution including FE colleges.

"We hope, however, that this move is instigated in a fair and even way that means parity across education and does not favour one sector over another."

New regional roles at Ofsted

Chris Henwood
@Chris_Henwood

The identities of six new Ofsted regional directors have been announced following a shake-up aimed at driving up provider standards.

Each regional director will report directly to Ofsted boss Sir Michael Wilshaw and will be responsible for quality of inspection in their region along with the improvement of standards in childcare, schools, and learning and skills.

The announcements came the same month as Ofsted boss Sir Michael Wilshaw told MPs on the Education Select Committee that schools were improving, but there was a "real problem in learning and skills".

"The regional directors will be my voice in the regions with the necessary autonomy and authority to support providers and challenge underperformance," he said on the new appointments.

Sir Michael's comments to the select committee saw him clash with the Association of Colleges (AoC).

Flanked by Mr Coffey, he said the system for failing schools was different to that faced by colleges.

"I think one of the reasons why schools are improving their performance but colleges aren't, is that there are very clear consequences to failure and underperformance in the schools sector," said Sir Michael.

"If a school becomes inadequate and remains so, the head usually goes, something usually happens to the governing board ... etc."

"We don't sense there's that same sense of clear consequence for failure in the FE sector."

Sir Michael's claim drew a swift rebuttal from Joy Mercer, AoC's director of policy.

"The consequences for failure in a college, for instance, are comparable to schools — governing bodies regularly hold senior management teams to account for performance," she said

But Sir Michael won Ms Mercer's approval with plans to bring school careers guidance under the inspection remit, but reiterated fears that college principals had lost focus on the quality of teaching.

"Getting principals of colleges to focus on what's important is absolutely critical. They lost their way a bit and focussed on capital investment, extending their reach, building programmes, going abroad to attract students and so on," he said.

"All those things are important, but equally, if not more important is what's happening in the workshop or the classroom — as an eminent ex-principle said to me 'they need to start worrying more about what's happening in Deptford rather than Delhi'."

Meanwhile, with a government announcement on the funding of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) next month expected to include a single pot of cash taking in the adult skills budget, Mr Coffey said he wanted to see FE representation on LEP boards.

He also expressed fears the FE sector was not ready for the raising of the participation age (RPA), and that funding problems had been "at the heart" of many college problems.

"Funding has been at the heart of many problems we've identified and the report does pose the question 'is the system fit for purpose?' Its main reference point is the financial incentives have all been wrong; they've led to very low level qualifications being delivered across the board to a wide number of students" said Mr Coffey.

Ofsted's new regional post-holders are Sally Rowe for the North West; Nick Hudson for the North East, Yorkshire and Humber; Louise Soden for the Midlands; Sean Harford for east of England and London; Mr Coffey for the South East, in addition to his role as current national director's role; and Lorna Fitzjohn for the South West.

See page 6 for 157 Group executive director Lynne Sedgmore's take on Sir Michael's FE views

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Editor's comment

Protect or postpone?

The promise of transitional protection from the Skills Funding Agency has unsurprisingly been welcomed within the sector.

After all, it should smooth out the turbulent times ahead as qualification rate variations between the old and new funding systems hit double, sometimes triple digit percentage points.

The way the system puts qualifications of hugely varying credit values into cumbersome bands is the problem and could lead to further issues.

There will naturally be temptation for providers to favour the delivery of more cost-effective qualifications that are nearer the lower credit end of each funding band.

So given this, and that transitional protection can only be temporary, I would question whether the funding system change is a wise move at all?

Despite developing the system for more than two years, too much at this late stage remains unclear.

And is our current system so bad? Even if it is, can't it be tweaked rather than thrown out with the bathwater?

The agency has already delayed introduction of the new regime in 2012/13, and they should do so again for 2013/14.

I would favour a permanent delay.

Nick Linford, editor

Correction

Phoning and emailing, then phoning again and re-emailing, a number of busy London colleges on one story is what could reasonably be called 'doing the donkeywork'. Some reporters would also argue that number-crunching and reading official reports fall into that category, too.

So with all the time-consuming 'donkeywork' done on our last edition's double page spread investigation into London colleges, it was a tad annoying to see the final writing go awry. It's Croydon, not Croyden.

Thanks to Shirley Woodcock at Wimbledon-based Capital Training Group, for pointing out the error.

Have you spotted something wrong with this edition of FE Week?

If so, feel free to tell us about it, including the page number and story headline, and explain what the problem is. Email us at news@feweek.co.uk with Corrections in the subject line.



Data for course directory to be rated

Rebecca Cooney

@AnyNameButBecky

Providers will be scored on information they submit to the National Careers Service (NCS) online course provider directory in a bid to combat problems with missing and incomplete data.

The provider quality dashboard, to be introduced in April, will rate providers according to the quality of the data they upload to the directory and will make it mandatory for the entry for each to include a course summary, entry requirements and a course-specific web address.

The NCS update announcing the dashboard said it would "provide an objective measure of [data] quality."

Submitting information to the directory is a Skills Funding Agency contractual requirement, but concerns were raised last year over the directory failing to adequately display the options available to people searching for courses.

Following issues raised by the Association of Colleges (AoC), the response from NCS director Joe Billington, seen by *FE Week*, addressed "problems encountered by colleges and learning providers," including data quality, bulk uploading of data and the site's functionality.

He added: "The tool [provider quality dashboard] is intended to support conversations about course directory data quality between relationship managers and learning providers and to show to learning providers the reasons why their data may not always be found through the course directory."

The AoC also said the directory had been problematic.

Policy director Joy Mercer said: "No project of this size is without snags and we are working with SFA to make sure that the initial wrinkles are swiftly ironed out, which also means we are encouraging members to get their information up onto the directory as soon as they can."

She described the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' investment in the project as "a positive step" that would "no doubt produce rewards" for aspiring learners.

According to the NCS, 150,000 searches a month are conducted on the directory and the number of failed searches has dropped from 45 per cent of searches per month to less than 10 per cent since November.

Stephen Hewitt, Morley College's strategic funding, enrolments and examinations manager, who has attended sector feedback meetings about the directory with the agency and the Information Authority, warned further investment would be needed to improve the search engine ranking of the course directory.

He said: "Our systems aren't showing we're getting any referrals from the information we provide so we're quite surprised to find they're getting 150,000 hits a month."

Mr Hewitt pointed out prospective learners would simply enter their desired course and location into a search engine and would find, as he had, the top results were local college websites or a commercial competitor to the course directory.

"I've yet to see the course provider's directory on the first page of Google, which effectively means it doesn't exist."

He said there were "genuine concerns about the entire validity of the project".

"The provider quality dashboard will improve it, and the data on there will be better; I just don't see the point of the directory – there is already a course provider directory available and easily searchable by the public and it's called Google," he said.

An agency statement outlined the support available for providers, including a dedicated team of information officers, contactable at support@coursedirectoryproviderportal.org.uk, and seminars taking place in March.

Joe Billington told the AoC there were clearly further improvements to be made, and added the NCS would work with providers to ensure the improvements to the technical specifications of the directory continued to improve the customer experience.

Comment

Ofsted clashes with AoC over 'consequence of failure'

Sir Michael is inaccurate. Whilst there may not be a system for replacing principals of colleges judged inadequate, in my experience, very often resignation and replacement follow swiftly. Indeed the life of a principal can be 'nasty, brutish and short'.

Whilst there can be no room for complacency, since it's my belief that there is always room for improvement, and college leadership teams need to have a primary focus on teaching and learning, providing that the management capacity

and capability is there, then colleges should seek out opportunities both commercial and otherwise. This is particularly the case now as the public purse shrinks and is likely to continue to do so.

Sir Michael has a great track record of improvement, and one of which I would be proud, but in my opinion his comments are narrow, ill informed, albeit motivated by a sincere determination to improve provision for students across the learning network.

Mike Hopkins

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FE Week profile

Ben Nicholls ~ his story

Chris Henwood

@Chris_Henwood

The new head of policy at Newham College talks to FE Week

Meet Ben Nicholls — not too many in the world of FE will have heard of him, but quite a responsibility rests on his shoulders.

The recently-appointed head of policy at Central London's Newham College shies away from playfully-suggested titles such as FE tsar and FE champion, but with his trailblazing role within the sector, they are a suggestion he may have to get used to.

"It may be a slightly odd appointment in some ways and certainly it's a very brave one, but I hope it could be quite good for the sector as well as for the college and for me," says Nicholls.

"I may be a Newham man and the college is my employer, but any institution like that, in my personal view, is weaker if it determinedly stands alone."

Of course, FE bodies such as the Association of Colleges or University and College Union already take their own policy stance and do their bits to promote sector interests, meanwhile some institutions may well have senior officials with remits that take in such issues, but Stoke-born Nicholls is just a policy man.

"FE is misunderstood in a lot of policy making and there is a huge amount of FE that is doing the most fantastic job and I see my job as shouting about that and to come up with some creative ways of getting people to listen," he explains.

"It is unusual, but there is a model for the role and that is in HE. The most enterprise-engaged universities have got policy advisers or chiefs of staff or heads of policy and strategy who are based in vice chancellors' offices with a similar remit to mine."

And it seems Nicholls' college bosses have got themselves a man destined for a high-powered career in education. After all, we're looking at a background that includes three years spent advising the House of Commons Education Select Committee, plus spells as policy adviser at the Department for Education and private secretary to Lord Laming during his review of child protection practice. It's quite a list at the age of just 25.

"What I hope I bring to the table is experience working with MPs and civil servants, trade unions, academics and researchers and I know how to engage with bodies like select committees and the departments," says Nicholls.

And then there's the family connection.

Nicholls' grandfather, Aubrey, taught English and his mother, Tamar, still does. Meanwhile, his sister, 23-year-old Daisy, is a drama teacher and his father, David, is a professor of music at the University of Southampton.

However, a career in education wasn't the seamless path it may at first appear because there was no call to the classroom. But,

importantly, music didn't beckon either despite two degrees in the subject.

"I very consciously decided not to go into music when I graduated," says London-based Nicholls, whose family moved to Southampton when he was 12 years old and still live there.

"There were two reasons for that — one was that I was nowhere near good enough and you have to have that degree of self-awareness in the arts.

"I'm sure I could have struggled along on the second rank, but nobody was ever going to see my name in lights and I was fine with that.

"The second reason was that it's quite important in life to me that your profession isn't your hobby. I didn't want to be 'music, music, music' all day long. Now it's a treat and a sort of geeky escape going to a concert or playing duets with my housemate."

He continues: "So when I left university I was lucky to get a place on the civil service grad scheme and they ask what department you're most interested in.

"Well, I can't drive; I've never really been ill; and I've never committed a crime, so I thought at the age of 20, 'how on earth would I survive a day in any department?'

"I can't drive; I've never really been ill; and I've never committed a crime – 'how on earth would I survive a day in any department?'"

"I'm not particularly well-travelled — okay I've been on the odd family holiday — but I have been to school and university, so I reckoned I could handle education.

"So I asked to go to what was then the DCSF [Department for Education predecessor the Department for Children, Schools and Families] and had an amazing two years there.

"But what dawned on me from that, and also my parents doing the jobs they do, is a belief that if we get education right, quite a lot of that other stuff — like health and crime — takes care of itself.

"So I thought if I'm going to do public service, education seemed like quite a good place to hang out, but it is also in the blood."

The issue of public service proves a rich vein of conversation with Nicholls, who proudly lists founder and chief executive of young person's theatre charity The RicNic Trust on his CV.

And there's also, among others, a four-year spell from 2006 as volunteer with the Red Balloon Learner Centre Group, which helps severely bullied youngsters back into education.

"RicNic was something we started up at



school largely as an excuse to try and meet girls and then, after we'd done it for a couple of years and we'd all left school, the kids from the years below took it on," says Nicholls.

"It's basically a youth theatre and summer camp except there are no adults — so the director is a teenager, and the techies, the band and everyone else. They just do it themselves and I run the trust which funds it.

"The other thing is we don't charge fees because effectively that would mean only the middle class kids in the area could get involved and that's not what we want, we want the most talented kids in the area, which means we have to do the whole thing by fund-raising.

"And Red Balloon is an amazing charity. I had a couple of friends at uni and as part of their education degree they were teacher training, and they went to do some music and drama workshops with Red Balloon in Cambridge. I was asked if I wanted to go play the piano for these workshops.

"I fell in love with the people who run it and the kids are just absolutely terrific. You'd think some of their stories are made up — girls who were told on their first day at school they were too pretty and if they came back the next day they'd be burnt and they came back the next day and they got set on fire."

Meanwhile, a further public service revelation for Nicholls is his hope to one day enter the House of Commons as a Liberal Democrat MP.

"I made no bones about that when I was working with MPs and of course a very important part of being a servant of the Commons is political neutrality, and I always took that very seriously because I wanted all sides of the house to have faith in the advice I was giving," he says.

And Nicholls is confident that such aspirations, now out of the bag, won't impinge upon his new job.

"My colleagues at Newham know I'm politically-motivated and they know it's something I'm interested in doing — but what's really important is that I'm still able to engage with policymakers across the spectrum," he rightly points out. But that doesn't make him an FE champion, he'd say.

FE Week is delighted to unveil Ben Nicholls as a new columnist.

He will be writing exclusively for FE Week on his dealings in the corridors of power.

His first column features in the next edition under the title FE insider.

It's a personal thing

What's your favourite book?

An Equal Music by Vikram Seth

What did you want to be when you were younger?

An MP. Four years working with them hasn't changed my mind, although it did change my politics

What do you do to switch off from work?

Hill-walking in Scotland, but playing and listening to music if that's not viable

If you could invite anyone to a dinner party, living or dead, who would it be?

I think the answer to this changes every day, but at the moment [Second World War RAF pilot] Douglas Bader for amazing stories, [German singer] Max Raabe for after-dinner entertainment and Michael McIntyre for jokes would definitely get a look in

What would your super power be?

To survive without sleep

FE Week Experts

Rising to the challenges we all face

Ofsted boss Sir Michael Wilshaw had some tough words for FE at a recent Education Select Committee hearing, and while some of his comments may not have been well-received, that's no reason to be dismissive says Lynne Sedgmore.



I speak frequently with Ofsted during these delicate and complex times.

I believe all colleges set out to offer good provision and to do good work for their students, employers and communities.

But I am deeply concerned at the impact on the reputation of colleges that Ofsted's currently-expressed views have.

Off-the-cuff remarks with little basis in evidence, such as some of what we heard at the recent Education Select Committee hearing [see page three], are unhelpful, and I reiterate this continually in my conversations with senior staff.

Having said that, I believe we must take notice and respond with true professionalism to the accurate and rigorous elements of Ofsted's work.

“FE is fundamentally important and ‘little understood’”

While the media headlines have been grabbed by claims about poor teaching and unaccountable leadership, there are, equally, important messages about how colleges have, in the past, fallen victim to a poorly-conceived skills system and some less than rigorous inspection results which inadequately considered student success rates when giving grade one results.

Sir Michael Wilshaw's acknowledgement that guidance in schools needs closer scrutiny is to be welcomed. As are Matthew Coffey's assertions that funding may have driven an inevitable leadership focus on business needs, and that colleges must be full partners with LEPs in any future employer-led funding system.

These are signs that, within Ofsted, there is a desire to see fairness and a strong FE sector that benefits from healthy student recruitment, engages with the business community to ensure its graduates gain jobs and, as a central preoccupation, delivers outstanding teaching and learning in every institution and community.

There was an acknowledgement on all sides of the Select Committee hearing that FE was “fundamentally important” and “little understood”.

Lynne Sedgmore, executive director of the 157 Group

New funding reform ‘is a real nightmare’

A bill setting out exciting aspirations for people with special educational needs (SEN) could be stymied by funding reforms warns Alison Boulton.

Launching the Children and Families Bill this month, Children's Minister Edward Timpson said the intention was to create a system that put children, parents and young people in the driving seat.

Legislation that prioritises support and aspiration for young people and their families is to be applauded as these values underpin the idea of education for all.

In the Green paper, published in March 2011, this was applied to those with SEN or learning difficulties and disabilities and the aim was to develop more joined-up provision for these learners by linking education, health and social care.

The new 0-25 system would promote joint assessment and improved choice to make planning a future simpler and less confrontational, leading to greater personal independence and employability.

The post-16 lobby has been strong and united and after two years, 53 clauses about children and young people with SEN are now included in the Children and Families Bill.



will allow schools to extend their provision up to the age of 25, which is hardly the ideal setting in which to prepare for adulthood and something we need to guard against.

So, while there is more work to do around the bill, it is good to have some very sound material to work with.

One of our biggest challenges is that running alongside the legislative reforms, but not subject to parliamentary scrutiny, is a set of funding reforms for those described as having ‘high needs’.

They will be introduced this coming September, a year before the SEN legislation, and are intended to create a ‘simple and transparent’ 0-25 funding system for all pupils and students with support costs of more than £10,000.

The proposals replace a single funding source, the Education Funding Agency (EFA), with three elements of funding, two of which come via the EFA but are determined differently, and the third being negotiated with and paid by each student's home LA.

The creation of this system, involving the EFA, LAs and providers, has become so multi-faceted and bureaucratic that hours of time are being spent trying to understand and implement each aspect of it.

For LAs trying to forecast how many learners they will place, and where, there are massive capacity issues.

For providers trying to plan on the basis of forecasts which are fundamentally inaccurate, it presents significant risks. But most of all, for young people and their families caught up in its complexities, it is a real nightmare.

We are left with a dilemma — while the bill heralds a new, person-centred, joined up approach, an impersonal, overly bureaucratic and uncertain funding system can only fail to deliver these ambitions and urgently needs to be reviewed and amended.

Alison Boulton, chief executive of Natspec

“There is a real risk the bill will allow schools to extend their provision up to the age of 25”

This is reflected in a new opening clause that requires local authorities (LAs) to take account of their views, wishes and feelings — very welcome, but important to ensure LAs have the capacity and skill to make this a reality.

We did not want a bill that was largely about schools and children, with a post-16 bolt-on that did not serve young people well.

We wanted young people to genuinely be at the heart of the proposals, actively engaged in their own assessments, supported to make well informed choices and encouraged to be aspirational about their adult lives.

This is why Natspec (The Association of National Specialist Colleges) is working with other post-16 providers to make sure that young people who need it can continue their education in an age appropriate setting, learning to live independently alongside people their own age.

Students with complex learning difficulties may take longer to learn, need time to assimilate their learning or to use assistive technology, but there is a real risk the bill

FE Week Experts

Staying on after school has a new meaning

Thanks to the raising of the participation age, staying on after school no longer means sitting in class after the end-of-day bell rings — it also means big changes for education along with benefits for 17 and 18-year-olds, as Lesley Donoghue explains.

Most parents and adults who work in education will be aware that from September 2013 the government is raising the participation age (RPA) to which all young people in England must continue in education or training.

This effectively means young people will be required to continue in learning until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 and from 2015 they will have to continue until their 18th birthday.

This change in law is intended to help young people to achieve national qualifications.

Recent statistics from The Department of Education have shown that 96 per cent of 16-year-olds and 87 per cent of 17-year-olds already choose to remain in education or work-based training after Year 11.

However, the small minority reluctant to continue in learning will now be given an extra push under new RPA legislation, helping them to achieve qualifications between

the ages of 16 and 17, which really can help to increase future prospects for youth employment.

From our own research, it would appear that not everyone fully understands the broad range of opportunities RPA presents and the most common misconception is that RPA means children now have to stay on at school until 17.

In fact, RPA makes numerous learning options available and offers young people the freedom to choose the option that is right for them.

This could be full-time education, or work-based learning — such as apprenticeships — full-time work or volunteering alongside studying for part-time accredited qualifications. So this means that students can learn what interests them, in the way that suits them best.

Under this new legislation, FE colleges, schools and training providers have an even greater responsibility to students, to monitor attendance and to ensure that any apprenticeships or other means of training are being delivered properly.

This is a duty that we will take very seriously at Reading College and we will have dedicated staff and independent careers advisers on hand to support and mentor young people and their parents from the age of 14

who are considering their options.

Part of every student's curriculum at Reading College would also include an on-going and personalised development programme called The Edge, which is aimed at giving students extra learning opportunities way beyond their qualification.

The Edge involves setting practical goals and objectives for pupils to develop skills based on employability and enterprise, and it also looks at wider personal development topics such as safety, well-being and respect.

The key message that I would like all educational facilities to deliver to their students and their parents is that RPA does not affect the school leaving age in the slightest.

Instead, it aims to offer young people the opportunity to continue developing skills and qualifications to encourage learning beyond 16. Students can stay at school, study at college, go to the workplace, undertake apprenticeships or work towards accreditations.

Those more suited to vocational education have the opportunity to find full-time employment whilst continuing to work towards some form of accreditation and not stay on in education if that is not where their skills lie.

RPA is about cultivating young people who are more empowered and ultimately more successful. It is about giving young people independence, freedom of choice and increas-



ing their self-esteem and will make young people think about their futures and what they want to achieve in life.

By working together, collaborating with students, their parents and career counsellors, we can make sure that every young person is engaged in developing their learning and ultimately their career.

Lesley Donoghue, principal of Reading College, part of Oxford & Cherwell Valley College Group

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"an excellent vehicle for planning for the challenges that confront the sector"

Martin Walker, Senior Assistant Principal Bournville College, on the 2012 Forum

"move forward and thrive in these challenging times"

Joy Mercer, Director of Education Policy, Association of Colleges

GUIDE TO FE LEARNING TECH

Nothing moves faster than technology. No other sector has seen as much rapid change and development in such a short space of time, and education technology is no exception.

Faster, more powerful computers, cheap and accessible tablet devices and innovative learning resources have opened the door to a world of possibility in learning.

Around the world, students are learning by playing games and watching videos online, text-

books are being published as interactive ebooks and massive, number crunching computers are working out the best way to tailor learning to the individual.

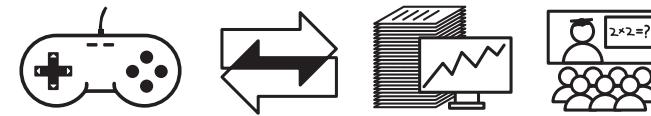
But FE, it seems, is a little late to the party.

It's clear, though, that emerging technologies are at least on the mind of FE Minister Matthew Hancock, who tweeted in January: "There's much more to do to take advantage of new technology delivering skills."

Hopefully the minister, the proud owner of an

A-level in IT, can pass his enthusiasm on to the rest of the sector.

To help you on your way, our resident tech expert, Dan Duke (illustrated right) brings you a dummy's guide to four of the biggest new trends in learning technology.



BIG DATA



Big data is the idea that data mining – the automatic processing of large databases to find useful patterns – and analytics can help us develop a better understanding of learners' behaviour, allowing us to shape education and frameworks around them on a much more personal level.

One suggestion imagines students using online learning systems that deliver bespoke content and assessments at the same time as measuring and collecting data about the learning process, like how quickly they are completing particular tasks or what kind of additional resources they used in study.

At the end the teacher can use the software to create an analysis of the learner's ability and progress, and from this they can tailor learning materials to suit the ability of the student.

If this process is then carried out with a whole classroom, a whole school or a whole country, the data can be used to get insight into student performance and which learning approaches work best.

Instead of waiting for end-of-year exams, teachers could continually analyse knowledge and performance and understand what methods work for which learners.

Data analysis like this could offer much more detailed and valuable insights than traditional methods.

GAMIFICATION



This one sounds exotic but it's pretty straightforward really, and it's certainly not a new trend in education.

In its simplest form gamification means the incorporation of game elements into non-game settings.

In the classroom this can mean anything from using actual game design and development as a method of organising the learning framework, to introducing a simple points system that motivates learners by creating a competitive atmosphere.

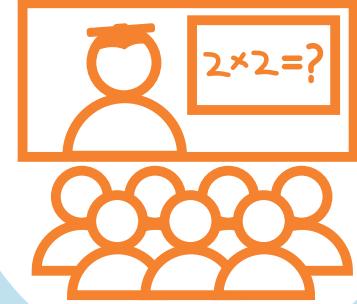
Educators have been using interactive, game-based learning for a long time but the huge uptake of console and online gaming in recent years has prompted a rethink of how gamification can help improve learning.

Most modern computer games include an achievement system, a series of goals and tasks that exist outside of the game's normal structure and narrative. This idea has been brought into the classroom, rewarding learners for achievements outside of the regular grading systems.

Many online learning resources have badge systems, where a learner earns a particular badge for reaching a certain level or completing a set number of tasks around a given topic, motivating the learner and allowing them to easily track their own progress.

This same technique is being introduced in classrooms and training schemes to great effect.

MOOCS



Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) allow very large-scale, and often free, participation in training via the internet.

MOOCs allow hundreds and even thousands of people all over the world to get access to further and higher education that they otherwise wouldn't have access to.

The term MOOC was coined in 2008 but many of the ideas behind the concept have existed since long before the 'digital age'.

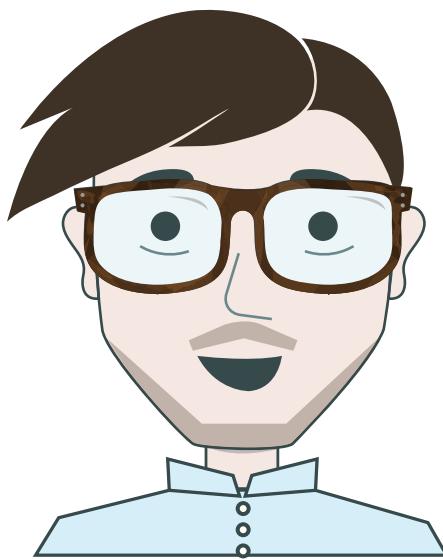
In the late 1800s thousands of people were enrolling in correspondence courses and in the 1920s millions of draftees were being trained for war by watching films created by the US military.

MOOCs gained a lot of publicity last year due to high profile MOOC project founders and contributing institutions, as well as large financial investment in a push to make e-learning much more sustainable and scalable.

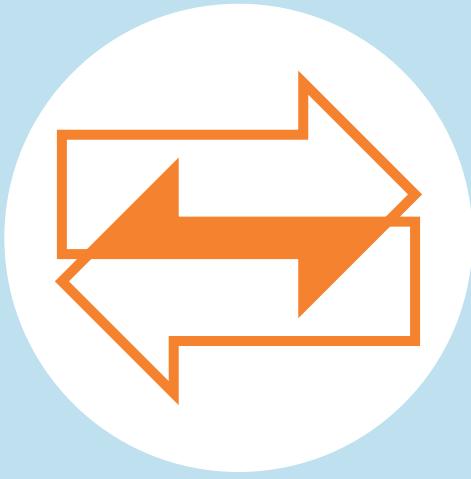
Their real feature is the huge student to teacher ratio, especially in comparison to traditional college or school courses.

This ratio would be impossible to recreate in a regular classroom so MOOCs offer a great opportunity to save resources.

Moocs not only overcome physical and geographical boundaries, they also allow many learners, unable to afford traditional pathways, access to specialised education.



FLIP TEACHING



Flip teaching is a broad term that refers to any use of technology that supplements classroom learning so that a teacher can spend more time interacting with learners rather than lecturing them.

It's commonly done using video lessons, produced by the teacher or a resource provider, for students to watch outside of class time.

Originally developed in the 1990s, flip teaching saw the computer as an exciting new tool to help improve the quality of education by allowing learners who studied independently to be coached, instead of lectured.

The learner studies the topic independently, outside of the classroom and then applies that knowledge through problem solving and practical work in class.

This method transforms the traditional role of the teacher – they no longer teach the initial lesson but instead become a tutor, able to guide the student if they are stuck.

Flip teaching allows for more time to do engaging work in class, avoiding long lectures where learners lose interest, and increases interaction time with the teacher.

The students also get to study the video lessons in their own time so it is likely they will choose to do so when they are more alert and ready to take in new information.

And, even if they do miss something, using video lessons lets them rewind and catch up on anything they didn't understand the first time around.

FE is at risk of getting left behind in the digital dust

With advancements in technology, FE has moved on, too – not that you'd be too aware of that if you were a visitor to this year's Bett show, argues Bob Harrison.

It was a promising start to my 12th Bett (formerly British Educational Training and Technology) conference.

Following Business Secretary Vince Cable opening the show at Excel, in London, and FE Minister Matthew Hancock's attendance and personal interest in digital technologies, there is a unique combination of factors that suggests the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) will be taking a serious look at how technology-enhanced learning could support the government's aims for the FE and skills sector.

This is particularly true of the massive open online course (MOOC) phenomenon which is gaining momentum in the USA and the UK.

As well as 100 ministers of education from around the globe being joined by the BIS ministers at the end-of-January event, the official Bett guide was entitled Schools and FE show guide 2013 and not only that, but there was a nominated FE day, too.



share, but I was as disappointed with my non findings as I was with the lack of authenticity in Mr Cable's words when saying things like "MOOCs, haptics, and cloud-computing".

The words came out in the right order, but somehow you got the feeling that the real meaning didn't really get communicated and got lost?

So I was disappointed, but not surprised as a Bett and FE veteran as it is what I have come to expect. Since the demise of Becta (formerly British Educational Communications and Technology Agency) more than two years ago and with Jisc's (formerly Joint Information Systems Committee) main eye being on the HE ball, compounded by the impending closure of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, who frankly never "got it," there has been no real strategic leadership of technology in FE.

This has to change, as does the mindset of the funding, audit and inspection regimes which are stuck in an industrial mindset when we need to be preparing students for a digital future. Most occupations now have digital literacy at their heart.

The schools are radically changing the information and communications technology curriculum and the digital expectations of my grandchildren, who will leave school in the late 2020s, will not be met by FE colleges with a creaky technological infrastructure and a skills set which needs major investment and refreshment.

The perfect storm of cheap mobile devices, high-speed always on broadband wifi, open source, virtual and blended learning is sweeping across the Atlantic and it is time those responsible for FE woke up and felt the breeze.

Perhaps then next year FE will be on the inside of the Bett show guide and not just a name on the cover? I live in hope and look forward to seeing many more FE friends and colleagues next year.

Bob Harrison, education adviser at Toshiba Information Systems (UK) and chair of the Teaching Schools Technology Advisory Board

Credit to the Association for Learning Technology who, encouragingly, are now official Bett partners for the first time, but even on the designated FE day the post-16 footprint was negligible.

I scoured the seminar programme and all the learning theatres for a sniff of FE providers who were "ahead of the curve" to learn from and perhaps

FE Week campus round-up

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School Jam UK winners Indigo Sky. From left: Laura Edwards, 17, Ashley Hubbard, 18, Alex Raworth, Huw Griffiths and Chloe Freer, all 17

Talented learners rocking all over the world

Young musicians from Derbyshire have hit the right note after battling it out to win the national final of the School Jam UK.

Indie rock band Indigo Sky, made up of Burton and South Derbyshire College music learners Ashley Hubbard, 18, Laura Edwards, Alex Raworth, Huw Griffiths, and Chloe Freer, all 17, wowed judges with their live performance at the London finals.

The band has won an all-expenses paid trip to play at Europe's largest music exhibition Musikmesse in Frankfurt, Germany in April, as well as a range of music equipment for their college.

Bassist Alex Raworth said: "We're so excited to have won the UK final of School Jam. It's

given us a huge confidence boost as musicians and has pushed our music performances further.

"I want to be a session musician in the future and this opportunity will be great for my CV and experience, as I have been learning new genres through this competition."

Burton and South Derbyshire College music lecturer Mark Dring said: "We're delighted Indigo Sky has won the UK finals of the School Jam competition."

"Taking part in competitions is a fantastic way for learners to test their skills against their peers, giving them valuable experience of working in the music industry and performing to a live audience."



From left: Jas Sandhu with MidKent College students Maddison Williams, Tiffany Mullis, Katie Harrington, Jessica Fuller, and Grace Harris, all 17, enjoying Zumba classes

Best foot forward for MidKent learners

Kent health and social care students began moving to a Latin beat when their lecturer persuaded them to shake it up with Zumba.

MidKent College learners were introduced to the energetic South American dance-inspired exercise by their lecturer Caroline Lee-Abraham, after she learned that many of her students did little to no physical exercise.

Caroline said: "Many teenagers today are quite unfit so I thought it would be a good idea to incorporate something like Zumba into my lessons.

"It will teach them more about what it means to be healthy as well as the different forms of

exercise available to us all."

Caroline's discovery happened when she was approached by University of Kent students Richard Smith and Jas Sandhu.

Richard said: "We came to MidKent College to do a survey on participation levels in sport and exercise, and to find out what activities those people who do nothing would be interested in."

Zumba proved popular, so Richard and Jas recruited local instructor, Emily Bailey.

Richard added: "The first session was a success and hopefully the number of participants will grow each week so the College can have its own weekly Zumba class."



Uxbridge College's Georgia Ward, pictured with Principal Laraine Smith, is celebrating after winning three bronze medals with Team GB at the Australian Youth Olympic Festival

Young diver wins big down under

A young diver from London made a splash in Sydney winning three bronze medals with team GB in the Australian Youth Olympic Festival.

Georgia Ward, 17 and from Perivale, claimed medals in individual 10m platform, 10m synchronised platform and 3m synchronised springboard.

Georgia, who studies BTec National Diploma in Sport and Exercise Science at Uxbridge College, said: "I'm over the moon. I didn't expect to go out there and get medals. I was aiming to get top five but I didn't expect to win, especially as my synchro partners and I had never trained together."

Georgia trains for around 25 hours a week as well as studying, and is hoping to continue her studies through a diving scholarship to a US university.

She said: "It's really hard to study and train, but the support I have had from my lecturers has been really good. My family have also been very supportive - you need them to be behind you."

Following a number of successes, Georgia hopes to compete in the Rio 2016 Olympics and in the Commonwealth Games in 2014.

She said: "It would be amazing to get through to compete at Rio, I'd be speechless if I was picked."

Making waves to create opportunities



Learner Miswan Sirat tests the coracle built on the course with Cornwall College trainer Stephen Mauder

Employability skills learners in Cornwall took to the high seas to develop their teamwork, confidence and skills base by building a traditional boat.

The group of unemployed people worked as a crew over five days to build a small coracle as part of a programme run by Cornwall College's Work Skills Training Academy, Job Centre Plus and training advisor Prospects.

Learner Morwenna Collins, 34 from Falmouth, said: "I've really enjoyed the course. At first I was very nervous as I suffer with confidence issues but the tutors are fantastic and made me feel so welcome."

"I didn't think I could do this, especially when asked to build a boat, but I really

surprised myself and got involved."

The coracle made its maiden voyage across the National Maritime Museum's indoor pool, before it was allowed to set sail around Falmouth Harbour.

Miswan Sirat, 55, who has just moved to Falmouth from Penzance, said: "The course was great fun. I now feel able to do other courses to build my skills to lead into employment."

Jo Dodd, work skills training academy manager at Cornwall College, said: "Although we wouldn't expect these learners to step straight into jobs, we are furnishing them with the confidence to be able to take the next steps on their journey to employment."

Want your college or training provider to appear on these pages?

Send your stories with pictures to news@feweek.co.uk including names, ages and course of students where applicable



A-level students Keira Leeks and Hywel Cruickshank, both 17 and from Tredegar

Drawing support for epilepsy charity

Oodles of doodles were created by learners in Wales who put pen to paper to raise money for epilepsy sufferers.

Students at Coleg Gwent raised £70 for Epilepsy Action by taking part in national Doodle Day.

Doodlers donated a pound and produced a range of imaginative designs, from patterns and cartoon characters to animal sketches and added them to a sprawling group doodle.

A-level student Holly Daniell, 17 and from Ebbw Vale, said: "I don't study art, so it's been really good fun to try something different for a good cause."

Epilepsy affects 600,000 people in the UK, and

scribblers across the country, including Sir Ian McKellen, Joanna Lumley, Rita Ora, Tess Daly, Sir Terry Wogan, Mary Berry, Gok Wan, Louis Smith, Lorraine Kelly and Michael Sheen got scrawling for the cause.

Art lecturer Hayley Acreman said: "Students showed brilliant imagination with some really creative designs, and definitely had oodles of fun doodling!"

"Thank you everyone who took part and donated money towards Epilepsy Action."

Students' designs will be entered into a national competition to win £250 of equipment and resource vouchers, and one doodler will also get a 3D stuffed figure of their doodle.

Learners get on board for competition



City College Norwich chief executive Dick Palmer with local schoolchildren and their paper planes

It was lift off in Norwich when youngsters rose to the challenge of a paper aeroplane competition at an FE college.

Schoolchildren jetted in to City College Norwich to compete for prizes for the design and accuracy of their planes, which had to be made from A4 paper and thrown at a target from six metres away.

It wasn't just planes being launched – the event marked the opening of the consultation for Norfolk's new University Technical College (UTC) specialising in advanced manufacturing, engineering and skills for the energy industry.

It is set to open on the site of a former factory in Norwich in September 2014.

City College Norwich chief executive Dick Palmer said: "Norfolk UTC will be providing a very different type of curriculum for 14 to 19-year-olds, with a strong emphasis on technical challenges shaped by employers, and we thought that it would be great to set local young people a fun challenge to get involved in during their half-term.

"Paper aeroplanes seemed to fit the bill nicely and the response we have had to this event, and more importantly to the whole concept of a University Technical College for Norfolk specialising in engineering and energy skills, has been really positive."



From left: Amy Williams MBE with award winner Dipendra Pun, 19, and Weston College chair of governors Jude Ferguson

Olympic inspiration for successful learners

A n Olympic medallist offered some golden inspiration at a North Somerset college's annual student awards ceremony.

Amy Williams MBE, who won gold in skeleton bob racing at the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics, joined Weston College students to celebrate their success.

She said: "Nothing is impossible. You can dream about something or you can go out and do it."

She heard students' success stories, including that of Emma Rogers, 20 and from Nylands near Cheddar, who won the principal's award for outstanding achievement.

Emma interrupted her level two beauty course in 2010 to have her son, and returned last February, before winning gold at the

international WorldSkills final and becoming the UK's top young beautician.

Emma, who has opened her own shop, Beauty by Emma, said: "Every time I win something it's a great surprise but it inspires me to go on to the next thing."

"I didn't do well at school because I am dyslexic but I found what I was good at and loved."

Higher education student of the year was won by Dipendra Pun, 19 and originally from Nepal, who is studying a foundation degree in uniformed public services and aims to go to Sandhurst as an officer.

He said: "I've really enjoyed my time here. There are fantastic opportunities and support."

Hair-raisingly talented learners at catwalk show

A young hairdresser from Cornwall took judges through the looking glass at the Cornish Skills Challenge 2013 competition and catwalk show, adding a twist to the 'Best of British' theme.

The competition was hosted by Truro and Penwith College and gave 154 competitors from colleges, salons and other training providers the chance to demonstrate their hair, beauty and complementary therapies skills.

The level two hair class was won by Truro and Penwith College hairdressing student Safi Mackie, 16, who showed off her flair for hair with a Lewis Carroll inspired look.

She said: "I called my creation 'Mad Hatter with a twist,' taking all of the characters from Alice in Wonderland and combining them."

Safi's design, modelled by fellow Truro and Penwith College student Liberty Sinock O'Neill, 16, also incorporated a dress made from 12 packs of playing cards and a hat made from real hair, rerafted from hairdresser's dummies.

Safi and winners in other categories will have the chance to go on to regional and national competitions.



Safi Mackie's winning design modelled by Liberty Sinock O'Neill

FE Week campus round-up

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Students tackle radio advert competition



From left: Winning team members Luke Crawford, Adam Holmes, Matt Turner and Mark Taylor

A team of creative media production students from Cheshire are set to take the airwaves by storm after winning a competition to produce a radio advert for a local rugby team.

Final year Macclesfield College students Matt Turner, Adam Holmes, Luke Crawford, all 17 and Mark Taylor, 19, took first place in the 'U-Create' competition sponsored by media company UTV and sports kit supplier Canterbury with their creative 30 second ad promoting the Sale Sharks.

Matt said: "It was a really practical project and working like that makes it easier to learn

and improve our skills."

All the team members are planning to go on to university or industry experience, so the project has given them a valuable insight into working to a live brief, they said.

Adam said: "The advert will form part of my portfolio for university interviews and it's really useful to showcase what kind of work I can produce."

The team will now get to go to a local UTV studio to have their advert professionally produced giving them even more industry experience.

One head is better than two for Midland colleges

Two Midland colleges have decided it's better to share after they appointed a joint principal to tackle funding challenges.

Marion Plant OBE took over from interim principal Jim Aleander at South Leicester College from Monday February 4, but will remain in her role as principal of North Warwickshire and Hinckley College.

Bobby Uppe, chair of governors at South Leicestershire College, said: "We are delighted to welcome Marion to our college. We are confident Marion will bring drive and energy to accelerate our ambitious improvement journey."

"We are grateful to Jim Aleander, our interim principal, whose hard work, energy and dedication has helped us move forward. Marion will be building on strong foundations."

The two colleges will form a federation, which they hope will achieve improved outcomes for their learners and communities.

North Warwickshire & Hinckley College chair of governors Tim Render said: "In a challenging financial climate colleges



Marion Plant OBE, joint principal of South Leicester College and North Warwickshire and Hinckley College

must look at innovative ways of driving up standards and meeting emerging student demand. Marion is an excellent principal and will work hard to secure continuous improvement in both colleges.

"This is not a merger. Both colleges will continue to be proudly independent."



HND and level three musical theatre students from South Gloucestershire and Stroud College auditioning in be in the chorus of a new show about Bristol's history

History lesson for musical theatre students

Young performers in Bristol had the chance to audition for a new show exploring a different side of the city's history.

The first year HND and level three musical theatre students from South Gloucestershire and Stroud College participated in a workshop audition to be paid members of the chorus in a new play, *The Dugout* by Amanda Whittington, to be staged at the Tobacco Factory theatre later this year.

Lecturer Shelley Kenny said: "This is a fabulous opportunity for our students to be part of an exciting, professional theatre performance which can be included in their

CV as relevant professional experience and will develop their general employability skills."

The play uses music to blend the story of black and white teenage night clubbers in 1974 when an IRA bomb exploded near Bristol's legendary Dugout nightclub, with a 1944 love story based on real-life accounts of a black GI shot dead by American military police in the same street.

Mr Kenny added: "This innovative project is a chance for our learners to be involved in a worthwhile, community-based activity that will enhance their development as performers in a professional context."

Free training 'getting people into jobs'



From left: learner Christopher Newton, 38, Diane Abbott MP, learner Mohammed Rouf, 31, and Free2Learn director Gabriella Gherscovic

Trainee bodyguards in London were able to keep a close eye on an MP when she dropped in to find out more about their classes.

The learners studying close protection at Free2Learn in Hackney were visited by local Labour MP and shadow minister Diane Abbott.

Free2Learn offers training in security, retail and hospitality free to those on job seeker's allowance to help them get back into work.

Learner Mohammed Rouf, 31, had never considered more study before finding out about Free2Learn.

He said: "I know now I need to study more,

because experience is important, but skills are what people want."

Like many Free2Learn candidates, Christopher Newton, 38, was referred through Job Centre Plus after leaving the military.

He said: "They looked at my CV and they saw what I'd done and they saw my potential. I'm learning so much, and I want to learn more."

Ms Abbott said: "It's been very interesting. With this kind of training people worry about churn, people hopping from one course to another; but here they seem to be getting people into jobs. I will definitely be following what they do in the future."

Want your college or training provider to appear on these pages?

Send your stories with pictures to news@feweek.co.uk including names, ages and course of students where applicable

Brave burns victim sets up charity to help 'people like me'

A London health and social care student has persuaded her classmates to go the extra mile to support burns victims by setting up a charity.

Vicky Knight, 17, from Dagenham, was the victim of a horrific arson attack on her family's pub when she was just eight years old. It left her with 33 per cent burns to her upper body and limited use of her hands.

As well as the physical scarring, Vicky also struggled with low self-esteem and bullying at school and said she found little support for her and her family.

Now she and four fellow learners studying BTec level three subsidiary diploma in health and social care at Barking & Dagenham College have founded Scar Quality.

She said: "It started a few weeks ago when I was giving a talk at college about my accident and my tutor Jackie said 'why don't you set up a charity to help people who have been injured?'

"At first I thought 'nah, I can't be bothered with all that work,' but then I started to think that really there should be more support out there."

She added: "It was nice of my friends to offer to help and support me. They all have their own roles and one of them even helped to design my logo."

The charity aims to provide a support network for burns victims of all ages as well as helping to fund wigs, creams, specialised cutlery, days out, counselling and mentor groups.

The group is planning various events to raise awareness of the charity and generate



From left: Katie McCarthy, from Rainham, who designed the charity's logo (pictured right), Elle Rae Aitken, from Dagenham, Vicky Knight, from Dagenham, Deanna Newstead, from Romford and Grace Rungay, from Dagenham, all 17. Inset: Vicky in hospital, aged eight

FEATURED CAMPUS ROUND-UP



funds, including a 28-mile sponsored walk from Dagenham to Southend on Sunday March 3.

Vicky said: "So far, we've got 20 to 25 people signed up for the walk, but we're hoping to get more to join in."

"Thank you to everyone who's doing the sponsored walk. It's mad how much support people can give, even people who don't know me."

But, Vicky said, it wasn't just victims themselves who need support. She said: "When I told my parents about Scar Quality, they said

it's amazing what you can do".

"There wasn't much support for them when I was in hospital. My mum asked to see a picture of someone with similar injuries to mine, so she could see how I would look, and they said they couldn't show it to her. I really want to help families like mine."

Vicky also hopes to provide make-over photo shoots to help improve confidence and self-esteem, something she said would have helped her in the first few years following the attack.

She said: "I want to help people who have been the victims of fire, like me, but I also want to raise awareness of the damage it can do—not only physically but mentally too. When my accident happened there wasn't much support other than my own network of family and friends. I'm hoping now, with Scar Quality, some good will come out of the tragedy that happened to me and my family."

"I want this to go on beyond the end of my diploma, I can definitely see it lasting a long time."



Celebrity chef, Glynn Purnell with his three new apprentices, from left: Poppy O'Toole, 19, Tom Croxford, 18, Mr Purnell and Kayleigh Allen, 20

Cooking up a storm with Michelin-starred chef

There was a surprise on the menu for Birmingham cookery students when a Michelin starred chef announced he would be taking on not one, but three apprentices.

South and City College ran an introduction to cookery course in partnership with chef Glynn Purnell, to help him find a future culinary star to be an apprentice in his award-winning kitchens, but at the final awards presentation he announced he would be taking on three students from the class.

One of the students selected, Kayleigh Allen, 20, said: "The next 12 months will change my life forever and I welcome the

challenge. I am so excited about the future and being able to follow my dream of becoming a chef."

Glynn used his local industry contacts to secure interviews for jobs, apprenticeships or work experience placements for the remaining students on the course.

He said: "All the students have progressed quickly, showing a passion for the industry while gaining new skills to set them up in their careers."

"It has been extremely difficult for me to choose just one student, which is why I ended up with three apprentices."

Chari-tea parties in aid of cancer awareness



Level three extended diploma in travel and tourism student Nikola Lech, 16, works alongside head of catering Colin Gascoyne preparing for the tea party

Travel and tourism students in Warwickshire worked on something a little closer to home than usual as they held a series of tea parties for charity.

The learners at Stratford-upon-Avon College laid on tea, cakes, scones and sandwiches to staff, students and members of the public to raise money for the Breast Cancer Research Foundation.

The first tea party, held in the college's Academy restaurant, succeeded in raising more than £200 for the charity.

Lecturer Beverley Brigden said: "The

students did a fantastic job in running a successful event. This was the first time they had worked in the Academy restaurant and the team were overwhelmed that they raised £200 to fight breast cancer."

Three of the students involved also had the opportunity to work alongside college's professional catering staff in the kitchen.

College Principal Martin Penny said "Congratulations must go to the students for coming up with this novel idea. The cakes and service were excellent and all for the benefit of a very important charity."



We're investing in
potential

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL (CURRICULUM AND QUALITY) £COMPETITIVE + HEALTH CARE + RELOCATION

Our sound financial standing has supported a programme of ongoing investment in estate and infrastructure and we have much more in the pipeline. It reflects our ambition to realise the full potential of our students, our staff and our local communities. With over 21,000 students, including over 1,700 on Higher Education programmes, Grimsby Institute Group operates from 15 sites and serves a wide geographical area stretching from the coastal towns of Scarborough in

the North to Skegness in the South and inland to the market town of Louth. This is an ideal platform for an experienced, values-driven FE leader who aspires to a future Principal role. A focus on quality is to the fore of our agenda and you'll lead on this work, continuing to develop an innovative and appealing curriculum, firmly establishing our reputation as a college of choice in the communities we serve and exploring new opportunities for our HE and 14-19 provision. We expect you'll have

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For more information, please visit www.grimsbydeputy.co.uk or contact Trudy Searle or Mike Galloway at Navigate on 07791 090141/07765 595758. Closing date: 7 March.



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Ofsted Report May 2008

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You should be qualified to degree level or equivalent in the relevant subject area and possess an advanced level teaching qualification, together with at least 3 years' teaching experience in Electronic Engineering. You should have the experience and ability to manage and motivate the team, and have 2 years' recent team leadership/supervisory experience. You should be able to develop relationships with local employers and therefore some recent industry experience would be an advantage.

Closing date: Friday 8 March 2013



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Business Development Adviser

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(Full time - however applications for 0.8 of FTE (4 days) will be considered)

Laser Learning Awards is an independent, Ofqual licensed national awarding organisation which was formerly known as OCN South East Region. We are building on our OCN origins to offer a fast growing portfolio of qualifications and other services for use by a diverse range of education providers including; schools, colleges, trainers, employers, charities and prisons. We are also a leading QAA licensed Access Validating Agency offering Access to HE Diplomas which are used by over 35 centres. We primarily serve London and the South of England. This post will mainly serve the northern and western part of our region including Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Berkshire and West London although travel to any LASER centres in the country may be required. This post is home-based and candidates who are located either in or close to these areas will be preferred.

The main role of the Business Development Adviser includes:

- promoting the use of our qualifications and services to new and existing customers across London, the South of England and beyond
- managing a portfolio of customer accounts
- providing related advice and support to our recognised centres.

Experience in, and knowledge of, education or training and in particular of qualifications and awarding organisations, would be a distinct advantage, but an applicant with the right level of personal education and the potential to get up to speed with the educational context would be able to apply for this post.

For further details please download the application pack from the vacancies tab of our website at www.laser-awards.org.uk or email e.sharp@laser-awards.org.uk

Please submit your application by email to e.sharp@laser-awards.org.uk or by post to, Business Development Adviser Post, Laser Learning Awards, Keynes College, University of Kent, Canterbury, CT2 7NP.

Deadline for receipt of applications is 5.00pm on Monday 4th March 2013

VICE PRINCIPAL (CURRICULUM & QUALITY)

c.£65,000 per annum

Location: Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire
Contract type: Full time | Contract term: Permanent



Stratford-upon-Avon College is seeking to recruit an exceptional individual to join our new Executive Leadership Team.

You will:

- Be a Senior Post Holder and deputise for the Principal as required
- Have a proven track record of leading the delivery of excellence in teaching and learning across a broad range of curriculum areas
- You will develop and lead a transformational curriculum and quality strategy
- Put learners at the heart of our drive for excellence through the delivery of an exceptional Learner Services function
- Be able to evidence significant experience in developing and delivering highly effective, robust and sustainable quality processes to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning
- Be able to demonstrate drive, determination, resilience, innovation and excellent leadership whilst having highly developed interpersonal skills and an awareness of self and others
- Be a genuine team player with a desire to support others in achieving shared aspirational goals

For an informal conversation about the role, please call our **Principal, Martin Penny, on 01789 417435**

For further information or to apply for the post please visit:

<http://www.stratford.ac.uk/AbouttheCollege/JobVacancies/JobSearch.aspx>

The Closing Date for applications is 10.00 a.m. on **Monday 18 March 2013**

The selection process will take place on **Thursday 4 & Friday 5 April 2013**



Contracts Coordinator (Part time)

The Northern Racing College seeks to appoint a part time Contracts Coordinator with immediate effect. Applicants must have experience in

- Excellent knowledge of both EFA & SFA funding structures, processes and procedures from a training provider perspective including familiarities with LIS, LARA and the "Provider" Gateway.
- Excellent up to date knowledge of PICs management information system
- Up to date and extensive hands on experience of management information reporting and making funding claims
- Liasing with staff and funding agencies

This is for sickness cover and is for 2-days per week; however we are prepared to negotiate on hours. It is expected that cover will initially be needed up to the 31st July.

Package is negotiable according to employment status and experience.

The selected Applicant will be asked to apply for disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau.

We are an Equal Opportunities Employer and Training Provider.

Apply for an application form and person specification to:

Michelle Bardsley on (01302) 861009
Email: michelle.bardsley@northernracingcollege.co.uk

**Shaping professionalism across
the learning & skills sector**

FE Guild Interim Chief Executive

(initial fixed term contract April - December 2013)

**Six figure package (FTE) or
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Subject to the support of the Further Education (FE) sector and subsequent ministerial approval, the FE Guild will be a key new organisation to define, develop and enhance the professionalism of the sector workforce and its providers, in order to ensure and improve the quality and impact of learning and teaching and the sector reputation.

As Interim Chief Executive you will be responsible for the setup of the Guild and the transition to initial operational status by August 2013, moving to full operational status thereafter. Working closely with an Interim Governance Board, key stakeholders and most importantly the sector itself; you will be responsible for establishing the structures and operational processes of the organisation, as well as engaging with the sector to develop and implement the initial strategic and business plans.

The successful candidate will be able to demonstrate previous highly effective strategic leadership of a business or organisation, successful change management experience in a challenging environment and a track record of building, shaping and leading highly successful teams, while working in a resource constrained landscape.

Strong advocacy, collaboration, interpersonal, partnership working and stakeholder management skills are all prerequisites for consideration. The individual appointed will have the opportunity to apply for the permanent post when advertised later this year.

If you feel you have the skills and expertise to be considered for this exciting opportunity we would like to hear from you. Further details including application information can be accessed at www.feguild.info

For an informal discussion about the post please contact **Peter Davies** at peter_davies@aoc.co.uk

Closing date for applications is Sunday 10th March
Pre-selection interviews will be held on **Thursday 14th and Friday 15th March**
Final interviews will be held on the afternoon of **Monday 25th March**

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Nikon D5100 DSLR
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PHOTO COMPETITION

If you provide apprenticeships then encourage your learners to enter!

Take a photograph that represents your apprenticeship and be in with a chance of winning an absolutely fantastic prize!

Email one entry before March 18th to photos@feweek.co.uk, including contact details, the apprenticeship qualification, employer and college or training provider

A selection of submissions will be published on the FE Week website. Our readers will vote for the winner, which will be announced on 29th March 2013

The competition is open to current apprentices only



FE Week Sudoku challenge

			8				5	3
							8	7
							7	9
	9	7	2		6			
			5	7				3
		5						
5							6	
3		9	1					
	8		7	4	1			

Difficulty:
EASY

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

Solutions: Next week

Last Week's solutions

5	8	6	4	2	9	1	3	7
9	7	2	6	1	3	4	8	5
1	3	4	7	8	5	9	6	2
2	6	9	1	5	8	7	4	3
7	4	8	9	3	6	2	5	1
3	5	1	2	7	4	8	9	6
8	9	7	3	6	1	5	2	4
4	1	3	5	9	2	6	7	8
6	2	5	8	4	7	3	1	9

Difficulty:
EASY

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

1			4		9
				6	3
	7	9		1	
7		8	1	3	
2					6
	8		6	9	
	2		3	8	
7		4			
3		9		5	

3	7	2	8	9	5	6	4	1
9	8	4	1	6	3	2	7	5
1	6	5	7	4	2	9	8	3
8	9	6	5	1	7	4	3	2
7	4	1	3	2	6	8	5	9
2	5	3	9	8	4	7	1	6
6	3	9	4	7	1	5	2	8
5	2	7	6	3	8	1	9	4
4	1	8	2	5	9	3	6	7

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

FE Week mini-mascot

Follow the adventures of *FE Week's* biggest and smallest fan!



"Mostly this week I've been putting on my wellies and splashing about in puddles"

You can also follow our *FE Week* mini-mascot on Twitter @daniellinford